

## TOURISM REPORT

### MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Jan Stoddard, Bureau Chief, Industry Services and Outreach  
Montana Office of Tourism  
301 S. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601

**Project Name:** Somers Beach Site Proposal

**Project Description:** Montana FWP proposes acquiring approximately 106 acres along the north shore of Flathead Lake just east of the town of Somers, MT for inclusion in the Montana State parks system. The level of development and type of amenities offered at the park would be developed at a later date and subject to another environmental assessment, but would likely include parking, trails, vault toilets, and picnic tables at a minimum.

\_Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?

NO

**YES**

If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if properly maintained. Montana residents use and value state parks. A 2018 ITRR study confirmed that over half of Montana residents (18 and older) use Montana State Parks at least once a year and that the importance of having state parks is agreed upon by all residents.

Additionally, Montana's 12.6 million non-resident visitors spent over \$3.8 billion in the state in 2019 (University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, 2020). Recreation access and activities in state parks are in high demand for visitors with continually increasing intent to visit a state park while visiting Montana. This intent to visit has dramatically increased this year as a result of the pandemic and a desire for safe outdoor recreation experiences. Flathead Lake is one of Montana's most important water recreation assets as the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi in the lower 48 states with over 200 square miles of water and 185 miles of shoreline. The existing Montana State Parks located on Flathead Lake are popular and heavily used by both resident and non-resident recreationalists and visitors.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

NO

**YES**

If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of

tourism and recreational opportunities with the addition of another State Park in the Flathead Lake area. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Jan Stoddard

Date: 8/7/20